



Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

Supervisor Patricia Jursik, District 8

For Immediate Release December 4, 2015

Contact: Bill Zaferos, Public Information Manager

414/278-4230 or William.zaferos@milwaukeecountywi.gov

Can the County Executive Sell Off Milwaukee County's History?

Will the County Executive sell off our Historical Society (Society) building and move archives into some "basement"? Will this building which is zoned business even get a public vote? This actual discussion took place before the Finance Committee during Budget deliberations. Better question: Does Abele get to unilaterally re-write history? With no archival history, a vacuum could be filled by any corporation or individual who has enough money to fill that vacuum and buy the building.

Second question: Are citizens even paying attention to this issue? Is there a progressive still standing who cares about the collective memory of what we once were? If "Progressive" is a dirty word, try "Sewer-Socialist". These are all words from our proud history when Milwaukee citizens cared enough to set aside park land for the public and create great cultural assets like our zoo, our museum and libraries, our art and performance institutions.

The County Board set aside approximately \$2 million to repair the Historical Society building in our last budget. We felt a collective guilt that this county building is "shrink-wrapped" so cornice stones do not fall on our citizens. In an amendment, the Board required the County Executive to complete a new lease agreement with the Historical Society within three months after a lengthy delay in failed negotiations so the money could be properly spent.

As author of the resolution, I feared that the county executive was unfairly using his nearly unilateral authority on non-park land sales to frighten the Society Board into more promises to beg, borrow and if necessary steal away their humble pride to pay for the neglected maintenance of what is in fact a county building lest it be sold. These negotiations were cold, business-like and representative of an oligarch's thinking not representative of a collective pride in our public institutions. The Society should be able to raise money for its mission, not maintenance of a public building.

Would the last historian, scholar, and public citizen (in the true sense of the word, citizen) please turn off the lights after exiting the archives of civilization in what was once the Milwaukee County Historical Society. Once the door on our progressive past is closed and locked, turn over the "OPEN SIGN" which may soon read: "FOR SALE".

###